

# Child Support Report

Vol. 36 No. 11 November/December 2014

## COMMISSIONER'S VOICE

### Plans underway to fulfill milestone legislation

We celebrated a major milestone at the end of the fiscal year when President Obama signed new legislation that will have lasting impacts on several key areas of the child support program. You'll see an outline of these key areas on the next page, and we'll feature several articles in future issues of the *Child Support Report*.

At a glance, the legislation involves six child support-related components. The law:

- Expands the Hague Treaty to strengthen our international case processing efforts.
- Gives Indian tribes access to important child support data systems.
- Encourages parenting time arrangements as part of child support order establishment.
- Requires new standards for data interoperability – or data sharing – among states.
- Requires mandatory electronic income withholding. This will potentially save states' and employers' time, resources, and postage – and get child support to families more quickly.
- Requires OCSE to submit a major report to Congress in June 2015.

And, this just in, we've reached a second milestone. On Nov. 17, we published a [Notice of Proposed Rulemaking \(NPRM\) in the Federal Register](#) titled "Flexibility, Efficiency, and Modernization in Child Support Enforcement Programs." We are soliciting public comments for 60 days, or until Jan. 16, 2015. After we receive public input, we will finalize the rule.

In honor of Native American Heritage Month in November, we highlight another type of milestone – OCSE issued its first competitive grants to tribal agencies (*see page 4*). We also put the spotlight on veteran parents, as we honored veterans on November 11.

Despite the holiday season when we all take on busier schedules and family commitments, we're rolling up our sleeves in OCSE to examine the various requirements of the new law – and more. After a successful pilot, we're taking steps to roll out a nationwide project that will give child welfare staff access to data through our State Services Portal. This information clearly will help child welfare workers connect foster children with family members – and offer many other benefits (*see page 3*).

I'm eager to start another year of working together to drive our strategies toward more timely and efficient services for our diverse families.

Happy New Year one and all!

**Vicki Turetsky**



## Inside this issue

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## We want to hear from you!

As part of the new legislation I discuss on this page (Pub. L. 113-183), HHS must prepare a report to Congress that reviews the effectiveness of the child support program, including an analysis of any unintended consequences or performance issues associated with program practices. The report asks us to obtain public and stakeholder input. We published a Notice of Request for Information in the Federal Register to solicit comments by Dec. 22, 2014. [Take a look at the instructions in the Federal Register.](#)

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## Law in Brief

# What's in Public Law 113-183 (H.R. 4980)?

On September 29, President Obama signed into law the Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act (Public Law 113-183), which includes six child support provisions.

### Section 301: Amendments to Ensure Access to Child Support Services for International Child Support Cases.

It does the following:

- Directs the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) to ensure U.S. compliance with any multilateral child support convention to which the United States is a party.
- Allows foreign countries designated as a Central Authority for child support enforcement in a foreign reciprocating or foreign treaty country to access the Federal Parent Locator Service (FPLS).
- Allows the use of the federal tax refund offset for foreign reciprocating and foreign treaty countries.
- Requires states to enact and implement the Uniform Interstate Family Support Act (UIFSA) 2008.

### Section 302: Child Support Enforcement Programs for Indian Tribes.

It does the following:

- Provides tribal child support (IV-D) programs access to the FPLS.
- Allows tribal child support programs to conduct pilot or demonstration projects through 1115 grants.

### Section 303: Sense of the Congress Regarding Offering of Voluntary Parenting Time Arrangements.

Congress finds that: 1) establishing parenting time arrangements when obtaining child support orders is an important goal that should be accompanied by strong family violence safeguards; and 2) states should use existing funding sources to support the establishment of parenting time arrangements, including child support incentives, Access and Visitation grants, and Healthy Marriage Promotion and Responsible Fatherhood grants.

**Section 304: Data Exchange Standardization for Improved Interoperability.** This requires the Secretary, in consultation with the Office of Management and Budget, to issue a rule within 24 months requiring states to use standardized formats to facilitate data exchange with other states.

**Section 305: Report to Congress.** This directs the Secretary to review and provide recommendations for cost-effective improvements to the child support program, and ensure that the plan addresses the effectiveness and performance of the program, analyzes program practices, identifies possible new collection tools and approaches, and identifies strategies for holding parents accountable. The report is due by June 30, 2015.

**Section 306: Required Electronic Processing of Income Withholding.** This requires all states to have procedures in place and use electronic transmission methods, as prescribed by the Secretary, for income withholding by Oct. 1, 2015.

For more details, see the [Commissioner's Action Transmittal to child support directors](#).

## Got coverage?

Open enrollment for 2015 Marketplace medical insurance plans starts Nov. 15. Encourage your family members and friends, and the parents and families we serve to go to [www.healthcare.gov](http://www.healthcare.gov), to enroll in quality, affordable coverage.

### Health Insurance Marketplace KEY DATES FOR THE MARKETPLACE

NOVEMBER  
15  
2014

MARKETPLACE OPEN ENROLLMENT BEGINS

DECEMBER  
15  
2014

DEADLINE: ENROLL FOR JANUARY 1 COVERAGE

JANUARY  
1  
2015

HAPPY NEW YEAR! 2015 COVERAGE BEGINS

FEBRUARY  
15  
2015

LAST DAY TO ENROLL FOR 2015 COVERAGE

HealthCare.gov



# A tale of two programs: Successful pilot gives child welfare workers access to State Services Portal

By LaShawn Scroggins  
OCSE

Indiana is one of several states where a single umbrella agency houses both the child support and child welfare functions. Since the Indiana Department of Child Services operates both programs, the Child Support Bureau is familiar with the challenges that child welfare staff has faced in locating relatives of abused or neglected children. To address these challenges, the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008, P.L. 110-351, authorizes child welfare agencies' access to FPLS. However, while the child support program's State Parent Locator Service staff members were ready and willing to assist their child welfare counterparts, operationalizing a process to get the locate data to them proved difficult for two main reasons.

First, a manual process was extremely cumbersome. Child support workers could not put an automated interface into place because it was difficult to update the state's older statewide automated child support system. Secondly, the volume of child welfare locate requests on top of their regular child support duties was more than child support's State Parent Locator Service staff could handle.

## The idea forms

A few years ago, OCSE brought the State Services Portal online. Soon after, the ERICSA (Eastern Regional Interstate Child Support Association) conference featured a panel on child support/child welfare collaboration. That's when Indiana child support director Cynthia Longest approached the OCSE panelists about the possibility of opening up the federal State Services Portal for child welfare workers, enabling them to perform their own locate functions. Washington child support director Wally McClure, who was attending the conference, also expressed an interest in this idea.

## Pilot project evolves

In October of last year, OCSE, in collaboration with the Children's Bureau, designed and piloted two child support applications (Locate and Federal Case Registry Query). The applications gave child welfare agency staff in the pilot states direct access to the Federal Parent Locator Service via the State Services Portal.

Jurisdictions used the applications in the portal to locate parents and relatives for placement and case planning services, such as initiating termination of parental rights, issuing court summonses, identifying potential adoptive homes, guardianship, finding runaway youth, or gathering information during the investigation phase of a child welfare case.

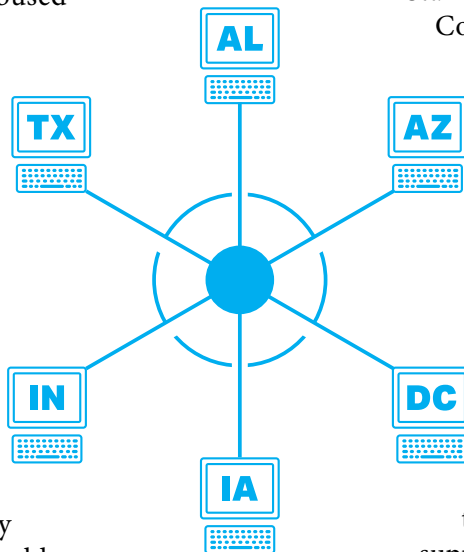
Staff in Alabama, Arizona, District of Columbia, Iowa, Indiana, and Texas participated in the pilot, which ran Oct. 1 through Nov. 30, 2013. OCSE provided training, distributed a user manual, provided technical support for setup and access, coordinated signing a Memorandum of Understanding for each pilot state, and offered help desk support during the pilot.

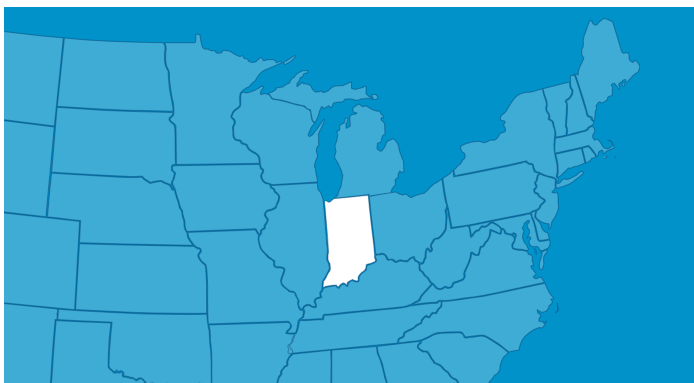
Pilot states had a great deal of flexibility. Some of the pilot's child welfare programs gained connectivity to the portal through their state child support program's proxy server, while other child welfare programs in the pilot set up their own proxy servers. In jurisdictions with a unit assigned to search for clients on behalf of the entire agency (Arizona, DC, and Texas), that unit was granted access and fielded requests, submitted queries, and returned results to child welfare staff. In other pilot states, select social workers were granted access.

## Results by the numbers

Of 559 Federal Case Registry queries, 292 individuals in a child welfare case matched to a child support case. In short, case managers found more than 50 percent of the individuals they searched for in the Federal Case Registry.

Of 1,797 locate queries, they found 1,553 matches for 704 unique individuals. OCSE provided locate information on 39 percent of the individuals for whom child welfare case managers searched.





## Indiana's positive experience

Joseph Combs, an assistant deputy director at the Indiana Department of Child Services, says, "DCS was privileged to participate in the Federal Portal Pilot Project." The department has a team of 18 specialized investigators that assist with locating absent parents and other supports for children in the Indiana child welfare system. These investigators have extensive experience in law enforcement. According to Combs, the investigators had a highly positive experience with the portal and were able to locate several supports for the children and families his agency serves.

Combs also indicated that during the pilot, the portal became the primary source for family-finding information due to its fruitful return of information. The investigators also used the portal to assist the child support agency in locating some of their "most wanted" individuals.

After the pilot project, Indiana and the District of Columbia took advantage of OCSE's option to continue using the portal through Sept. 30, 2014.

## Rolling out nationwide

To roll out access to the portal nationwide, OCSE and the Children's Bureau have hosted conference calls with state child welfare and child support directors, as well as child welfare IT staffs. OCSE is ready to provide all interested child welfare agencies with information, technical assistance, and training.

We encourage child support agencies to reach out to their child welfare counterparts to develop helpful policies and procedures for collaboration and to share information about this exciting opportunity to access FPLS data directly.

"We are very appreciative of the efforts of OCSE and the Children's Bureau to make this idea a reality!" says Longest. "I would recommend it to other child support directors who have also been unable to accommodate an automated interface or manual locate requests from their child welfare agency – it truly 'cuts out the middleman' in this process."

*For more information, contact the author at [lashawn.scroggins@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:lashawn.scroggins@acf.hhs.gov).*

## In Focus

# OCSE awards first grants to tribal programs

By Jeffrey Stocks  
OCSE Region VII

On Sept. 30, OCSE awarded \$210,000 in grant funding to five tribal child support programs to implement or expand family-centered services for tribal families. The Tribal Child Support Innovation Grants program is the first grant program that OCSE developed exclusively for tribal child support programs. The grantees are Cherokee Nation, Forest County Potawatomi Community, Fort Belknap Indian Community, Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe, and the Yurok Tribe.

**Initiatives like these help noncustodial parents fully realize their financial and emotional responsibilities toward their children**

Most tribal child support programs are relatively young, with half of the 57 comprehensive programs beginning operations since 2009. Despite their newness to child support case processing, tribes have been at the forefront of family-centered services.

"Community and family have long been at the heart of tribal child support programs," says OCSE Commissioner Vicki Turetsky. "We are excited to offer our tribal programs an opportunity to develop new family-centered programs as well as expand and update existing ones."

The grants for tribal programs aim to leverage family-centered strategies to help parents manage arrears, work with employers to better support working parents, and locate training and employment services for unemployed noncustodial parents.

"Initiatives like these help noncustodial parents fully realize their financial and emotional responsibilities toward their children," the commissioner says. "Family-centered strategies play a key role in promoting the financial well-being of tribal children and families by making child support a regular source of income."

## Two grantees' plans

One grantee, the Forest County Potawatomi Community, has operated its child support program for 11 years and recognized a need to engage with tribal



# OCSE introduces recipients of Behavioral Interventions grant

By Jessica Lohmann  
OCSE

On Sept. 30, 2014, OCSE awarded grants to eight state child support agencies under the Behavioral Interventions for Child Support Services (BICS) grant to better understand individuals' behavior and decision-making ability when it comes to paying child support. The five-year demonstration will explore the potential relevance and application of behavioral economics principles to child support services, focusing on areas such as modification of orders and early engagement.

The demonstration builds on the Behavioral Interventions to Advance Self-Sufficiency (BIAS) project conducted by the Administration for Children and Families' Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation. Both the Texas and Ohio child support programs participated in BIAS.

## Behavioral economics and child support

Traditional economics assumes that all people have unlimited time and ability to think through complex problems effortlessly to arrive at the "correct" choice. However, through our own life experiences, we know this is often an idealized view.

Behavioral economics uses insights from psychology and other related fields to help explain how and why we act in ways that are not always in our best interest; whether it's procrastinating on an important project, missing a deadline, or making impulse decisions. Using behavioral economic theories, child support programs can better understand why program participants do not always carefully consider options and analyze details.

## Evaluating the intervention

All of the grantees will work with OCSE and an evaluation team to develop and test interventions in at least two counties, with the intention that they will implement successful interventions statewide. To test the effectiveness and outcomes of the different demonstrations, they will evaluate all of the projects through randomized control trials or quasi-experimental studies.

To manage the evaluations, OCSE awarded the Evaluation of the Behavioral Interventions for Child Support Services grant to Washington State's Division of Child Support, in partnership with MDRC, MEF Associates, and the Center for Policy Research. OCSE sees this demonstration as a way to test a promising approach to business process reengineering, applicable in many different types of child support procedures.



The grantees are:

- California Department of Child Support Services; Sacramento County and San Joaquin County – *Dedicated Daddies Make a Difference*
- Colorado Department of Human Services; Denver County, Garfield County, Pitkin County, and Rio Blanco County – *How to Help a Partial Payer Pay: Using Behavioral Economics to Increase Payments to Colorado Kids*
- Office of the Attorney General for District of Columbia Child Support Service Division – *D.C. Behavioral Intervention Project*
- Georgia Department of Human Services; Fulton County, DeKalb County, Macon-Bibb County, and Peach County – *Behavioral Interventions in Early Engagement for Georgia Child Support Services*
- Ohio Office of Child Support; Franklin County and Cuyahoga County – *Understanding Perspectives – Behavioral Interventions in Child Support*
- Texas Office of Attorney General – *Texas Start Smart*
- Vermont Agency of Human Services – *Behavioral Interventions for Child Support Services – Improving Performance and Customer Experience through Choice Architecture*
- Washington State Division of Child Support; King County, Thurston County, and Whatcom County – *Behavioral Interventions for Child Support Services*

For more information about BICS please contact the author at [jessica.lohmann@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:jessica.lohmann@acf.hhs.gov). For more information about behavioral economics and its application to child support, see ACF's Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation's recent [report](#) on using behavioral interventions to assist incarcerated parents in Texas modify their child support orders as part of their [Behavioral Interventions to Advance Self-Sufficiency Project](#).



# Chickasaw Nation's family-centered services show positive outcomes

By **Cassandra McGilbray, Director**  
**Chickasaw Nation Office of Child Support Services**

Connecting families with other beneficial programs is a key component in the Chickasaw Nation Office of Child Support Services' family-centered approach. Working hand-in-hand with other Chickasaw Nation programs, such as domestic violence prevention, drug court support services, family counseling, career development, vocational rehabilitation, daycare services, housing, and cultural education, the office helps families improve their everyday life.

Many people the office serves simply need someone to guide them in the right direction to keep their lives on track. Keeping this in mind, the office implemented an alternative to incarceration program called Tribal Enforcement Payment Project (TEPP). The program works closely with individuals to help them overcome barriers to employment or address other issues that keep them from supporting their families. In fiscal year 2013, the TEPP program had an average of 89 cases per month and collected \$165,276.30 in child support.

Most of the individuals enrolled in TEPP suffer from some type of drug or alcohol abuse. In these cases, the office works with treatment centers so that willing participants can receive needed help.

Child Support Services began another program called Family Connections, in January 2013, to keep families connected from the time they are no longer intact. A year later, they opened a satellite office 60 miles away in Ardmore, OK, offering a location closer to Chickasaw citizens in that area. Going a step further, they worked with the Judicial Department to offer hearings for families in that area. In August, the Ardmore court heard the first Chickasaw Nation child support docket and has assisted over 196 families to date.

During August, the Office of Child Support Services kicked off its Child Support Awareness Month with its annual "I Love My Child" family fun day. Several classrooms at the Chickasaw Nation Child Development Center participated. Later in the month, the office hosted a similar event at Wintersmith Park in Ada, OK, with 83 volunteers representing several programs in the Chickasaw Nation and other area programs.

The Chickasaw Nation Office of Child Support Services is proud to be a part of helping these families have a better quality of life, which will in turn help the families of the future. All office staff take pride in the efforts they make to help every family that crosses their doorstep.



Legal assistant Ashley Wallace demonstrates how staff members talk with visiting customers about the child support programs and services while helping them complete the service application.

## November is Native American Heritage Month

The number of tribal child support programs continues to grow.

**62** tribes operate child support programs.

**57** comprehensive programs offer a full range of child support services to families.

**5** others are in the start-up phase.

Tribal child support programs can find resources in the [Tribal Agencies section](#) on the OCSE website.

# Strategically stationed HEROES devoted to Texas service members' needs

By DeeDee Cauwe, Public Information Officer  
Texas Office of the Attorney General,  
Child Support Division

**D**uties associated with a parent's military service can complicate the child support process. Deployments, frequent relocations, and income fluctuations when called to duty make it difficult for parents to provide the emotional and financial support for their children.

These and other factors can take a heavy toll on veteran and military family life and compound child support or parenting time issues. In response, the Texas Attorney General's Child Support Division provides specialized child support assistance and enhanced services through a project called Help Establish Responsive Orders Ensuring Support (HEROES) for Military Children.

Three assistant attorneys general provide family-centered child support services to families of service members and veterans when they encounter difficulties resolving paternity, child support, and parenting time issues, or when they need expedited or individualized help.

For ideal accessibility, the attorneys are stationed near large military and veteran populations in Killeen, El Paso, and San Antonio. The Killeen site is near Fort Hood, one of the largest military posts in the world.

## Case in point

Recently, a National Guardsman who was 30 days from deployment called about establishing paternity for his newborn son. The HEROES attorney pointed the guardsman to the online application, provided information on the child support review process (a quasi-judicial administrative process for obtaining a child support order), checked the system to ensure the application was received, and coordinated with the field office assigned to the case.

Together, the HEROES attorney and field office established an order within 20 days of initial contact. The military dad secured benefits for his baby and knew his child support payments would be accounted for through the State Disbursement Unit.

In another case, the child support division received a request from a custodial parent service member seeking support from a service member stationed overseas. A HEROES attorney brought a stalled case closer to resolution by locating the overseas parent and acting as the direct point of contact for both parties. The case is moving

forward and the parents are scheduled to go to court for an order. The custodial parent thanked the assistant attorney general, saying, in part, "...you have been more help to me than you will ever know."

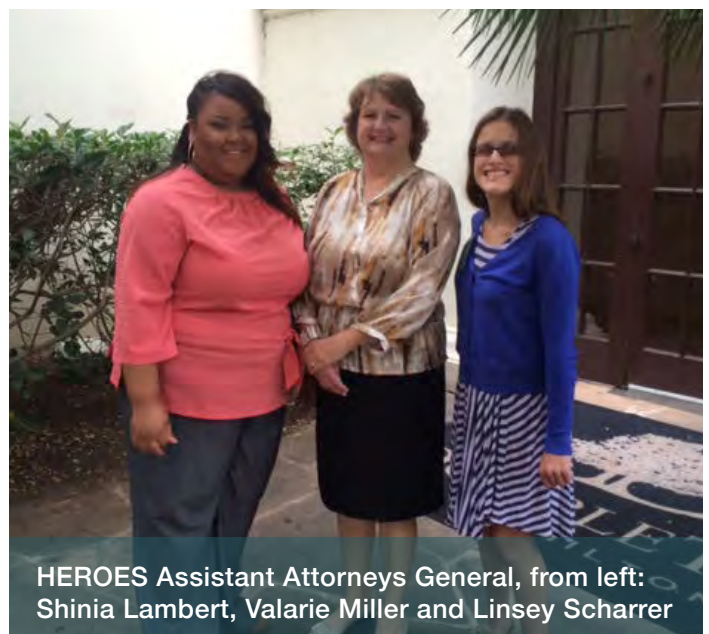
## Giving, getting attention

Referrals to the HEROES project come from numerous sources, including the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and the Judge Advocate General Corps. The referrals go both ways; HEROES attorneys often refer customers to external program partners for services not offered by the child support division, including legal assistance, physical and mental health treatment, and employment assistance.

To receive help, military and veteran customers can call the HEROES main line or contact a HEROES attorney directly in Killeen, El Paso, or San Antonio. Proximity to the military installations and Veterans Affairs centers enhances the services available to customers, as well as the ability to network with HEROES program partners.

Navigating the complicated and sometimes confusing child support system weighs heavily on service members as they face the risks of military service. HEROES attorneys are an important source of help for military parents who encounter difficulties moving through the child support system and resolving child support and parenting time issues.

*For more information about the HEROES project, contact Assistant Attorney General Pat Barsalou at 512-460-6096 or [patricia.barsalou@texasattorneygeneral.gov](mailto:patricia.barsalou@texasattorneygeneral.gov).*



HEROES Assistant Attorneys General, from left: Shinia Lambert, Valarie Miller and Linsey Scharrer



## News to help veterans in your caseload

The military and veteran populations in the child support program pose some unique challenges. According to the OCSE [Story Behind the Numbers: Veterans in the Child Support Caseload](#), “Over \$7 billion of the child support arrearages owed by noncustodial parents is owed by veterans. This represents about 7 percent of the total child support debt, slightly more than the veterans’ share of the population. In Alaska, Nebraska and Guam, veterans owe more than 10 percent of the state child support debt.”

These news stories may help you assist the veterans and veteran families in your caseload.

### Re-evaluation of Vietnam-era veterans’ discharges

The Department of Defense released information in September that may be good news for Vietnam-era veterans who received less-than-honorable discharges. They may be able to appeal the ruling of their discharge under new guidance, which could mean a reinstatement of their veteran’s benefits. During and after the Vietnam War, a significant number of veterans were released from the service due to misconduct. DoD says that misconduct could now be attributed to a previously unrecognized condition called Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, or PTSD. Veterans who believe their conduct and subsequent discharge was a result of PTSD can petition to have their cases evaluated by service review boards. For more information, read [the memo](#) signed by Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel on Sept. 3, or [this article](#) by the New York Times.

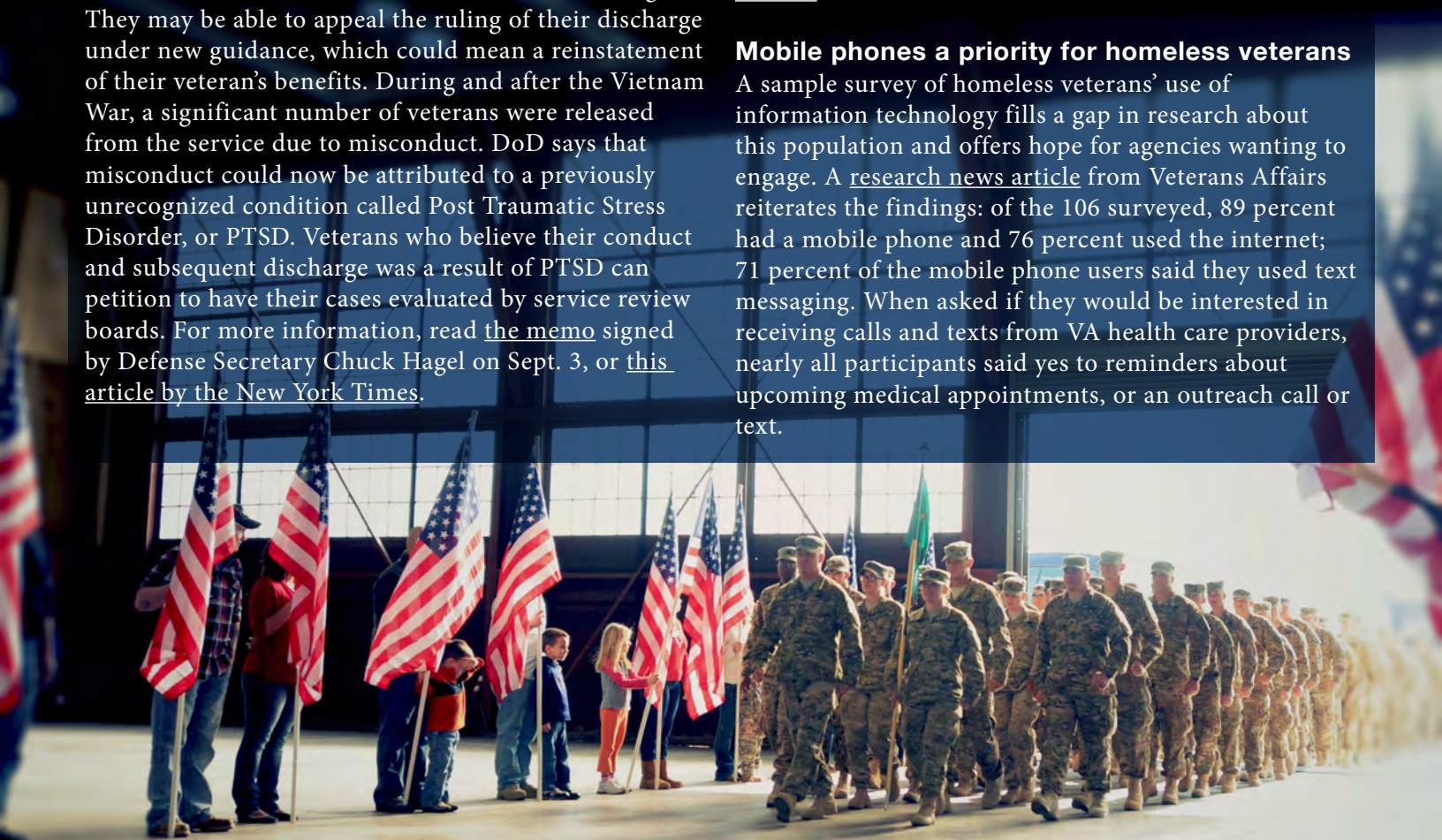
### VA awards community-based grants

It is difficult, and many times impossible, for a noncustodial parent who is homeless or nearly so to hold down a job. With this in mind, the Department of Veterans Affairs recently announced a series of program grant awards to help more than 800,000 homeless and at-risk veterans and their families.

According to the Sept. 30 news release, the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program will fund 82 nonprofit agencies so they can “offer Veterans and their family members outreach, case management, assistance in obtaining VA benefits and assistance in receiving other public benefits. Community-based groups can offer temporary financial assistance on behalf of Veterans for rent payments, utility payments, security deposits and moving costs.” For information on the SSVF program, see the [VA’s Homeless Veterans website](#).

### Mobile phones a priority for homeless veterans

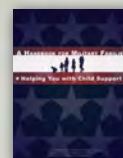
A sample survey of homeless veterans’ use of information technology fills a gap in research about this population and offers hope for agencies wanting to engage. A [research news article](#) from Veterans Affairs reiterates the findings: of the 106 surveyed, 89 percent had a mobile phone and 76 percent used the internet; 71 percent of the mobile phone users said they used text messaging. When asked if they would be interested in receiving calls and texts from VA health care providers, nearly all participants said yes to reminders about upcoming medical appointments, or an outreach call or text.



## On the OCSE website

Check out these two OCSE publications:

- [Handbook for Military Families](#)
- [Working with Military Families on Child Support Matters: Trainer Guide](#)



# Keen attention leads to top collection for San Joaquin County family

By Lori Cruz, Director

*San Joaquin County, CA, Department of Child Support Services*

The San Joaquin County Department of Child Support Services is celebrating a lump-sum \$50,000 collection, their largest in recent history. This amount, coupled with a smooth-running team of child support workers who obtained it, demonstrates how a routine case process can change one family's life.

It started in July when a title company asked the department for a lien payoff on property owned by a noncustodial parent in neighboring Contra Costa County. The case was immediately prepared for audit by child support officer Zulma Monroy-Aguilar and expedited by financial worker Irene Ware.

At this stage in the process, the department did not know if any money would be available to pay the lien. Numerous collection efforts had been unsuccessful; in fact, the custodial parent had received only one \$50 payment since the child support judgment in 2007.

When paralegal William Cossette received the "audit and demand" letter, he did not realize that this request would be different from dozens of others he processes each month. On closer inspection, Cossette discovered that, although three other California counties had recorded liens, Contra Costa County never recorded one. Cossette recalls, "Once I knew we didn't have a lien in Contra Costa County, I immediately prepared and overnighted one to the recorder's office with the hope that we would be able to collect something for the family."

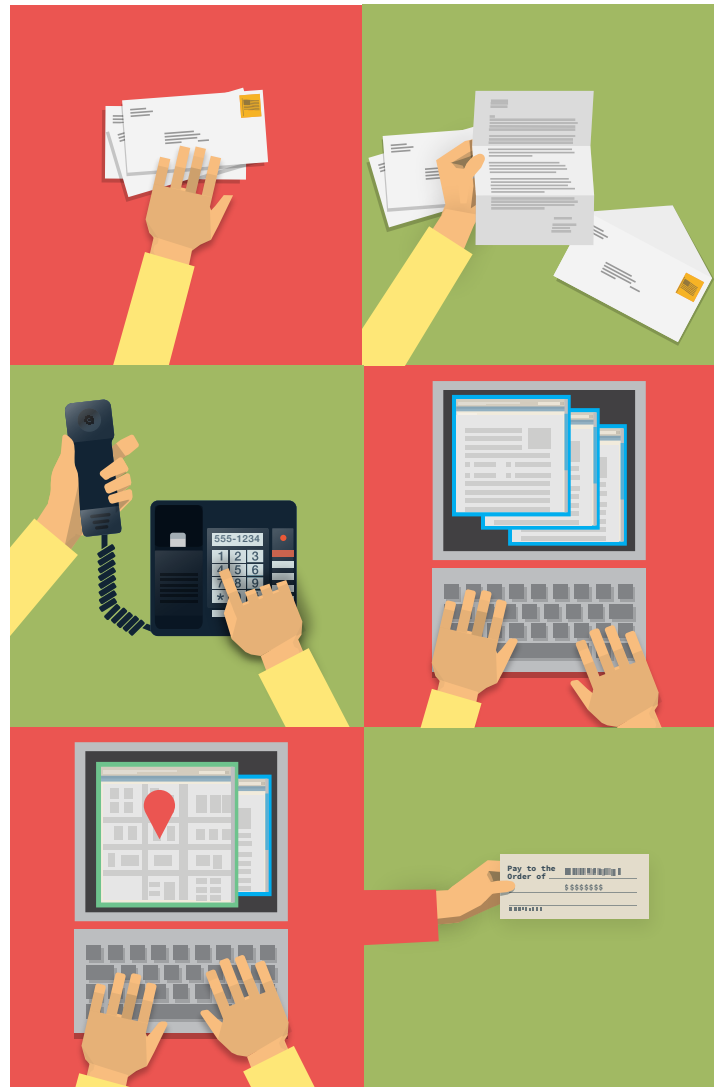
Soon after recording the lien, escrow documents revealed that funds were available for distribution. But then the department confronted another hurdle – it did not have a current address for the custodial parent. The audit verified that the majority of arrears were owed to the custodial parent, so if the county could not locate her, they would likely have to return the money to the noncustodial parent. This reality did not sit well with Cossette. "I just did not want to have to return any money that could be used to help the family."

After checking various locate sources and making some calls, Cossette found a new address for the custodial parent and advised her that she would soon receive a child support payment. The custodial parent was surprised by the news, saying, "I don't think I have ever received any payments from him!"

Shortly after Cossette spoke to the custodial parent, the department sent a \$52,255.98 payment to the California state disbursement unit. Of that amount, over \$35,000 went to the custodial parent. The remainder was applied to satisfy permanently assigned arrears in three counties. During a follow-up call, the custodial parent expressed surprise at the collection amount and thanked Cossette and his colleagues for their efforts on her family's behalf.

How did this collection change one family's life? At the beginning of this routine process, a mother was preparing to receive TANF benefits to support herself and her two children. Then, after a little more than six weeks, she no longer needed those benefits, and her children have their entitled support.

As OCSE Commissioner Turetsky said in her [September 2014 Commissioner's Voice](#), "That's why we are in business."





## Farewell ode from the editor

'Twas the night before publishing, and all through the halls,  
I scrambled and scurried, made last-minute calls.  
Our proofreader tired from tweaking with care,  
In hopes that perfection soon would be there.

Illustrations in place by our artist so gifted,  
"All done, no more changes!" he calmly insisted.  
Then I settled down quietly for one more read-through,  
And prepared to bid my last issue adieu.

When out in the halls there arose such a clatter,  
I sprang from my chair to see what was the matter.  
Away to the conference room I flew like a flash,  
Pushed open the door and glared at – a bash!

The staffers were clapping and cheering expressly,  
For the work **you** all do, for the children especially.  
New data had proved it, the research did show,  
Our virtuous outcomes continue to grow.

Now it's thanks to those staffers in OCSE,  
Who submit their news stories for readers (and me).  
And to all of my contacts in states and in tribes,  
In regional offices (!) and others besides.

After 10 years at the helm of the *Child Support Report*,  
I'm retiring – to do other things, in short.  
But I'll keep an eye on the program online,  
I'll be there to email – or call anytime.

So thanks once again from the depth of my heart,  
For your friendship, your essays, ideas so smart.  
Now, please welcome Kim Danek, new editor and chief,  
She works very hard to write articles brief.

Keep drafting your stories, submit them by deadline,  
Kim will feature your work with a byline and headline.  
Send good news, perspectives, interviews, voices,  
Your projects and concepts, intuitive choices.

And remember one thing – most important to hear,  
Practice plain language, be simple and clear.  
Your colleagues will thank you, however, much more,  
Customers will say, "It's you I adore."

Now back to the tale of this year-end edition,  
And the bash with my coworkers applauding our mission.  
As I drew in my head, and was turning around,  
Down the hall came our commissioner with a bound.

She was carrying bags filled with chocolates and such,  
And proclaimed a hearty "Thanks very much!"  
"To the workers right here and to those nationwide,  
You've achieved much this year, we are swelling with pride."

She spread out the goodies, the teams gave a whistle,  
And as all celebrated, I made my dismissal.  
I readied to post this *Report* on our website,  
Adding: Happy holidays to all, and to all a good night!

—Elaine Blackman

### Note from Commissioner Turetsky

"After 19 years, our beloved CSR editor, Elaine Blackman, is retiring from federal service. Under her leadership in OCSE for the past 11 years, she has turned the CSR into a widely read and admired newsletter and a national forum for child support innovation. I salute her public service, creativity, and commitment to the mission of this program. Elaine, I – and the entire child support community – will miss you and wish you happiness and a smaller workload in your retirement."

## Child Support Report

Child Support Report is published monthly by the Office of Child Support Enforcement. We welcome articles and high-quality digital photos to consider for publication. We reserve the right to edit for style, content and length, or not accept an article. OCSE does not endorse the practices or individuals in this newsletter. You may reprint an article in its entirety (or contact the author or editor for permission to excerpt); please identify Child Support Report as the source.

Mark Greenberg  
Acting Assistant Secretary for Children and Families

Vicki Turetsky  
Commissioner, OCSE

Gabrielle Pagin  
Director, Division of Customer  
Communications

Elaine Blackman  
Editor  
[elaine.blackman@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:elaine.blackman@acf.hhs.gov)

